BLITZ PHOENIX
Chapter 21
It Listens
Emily Brackhan
http://www.blitzphoenix.com/

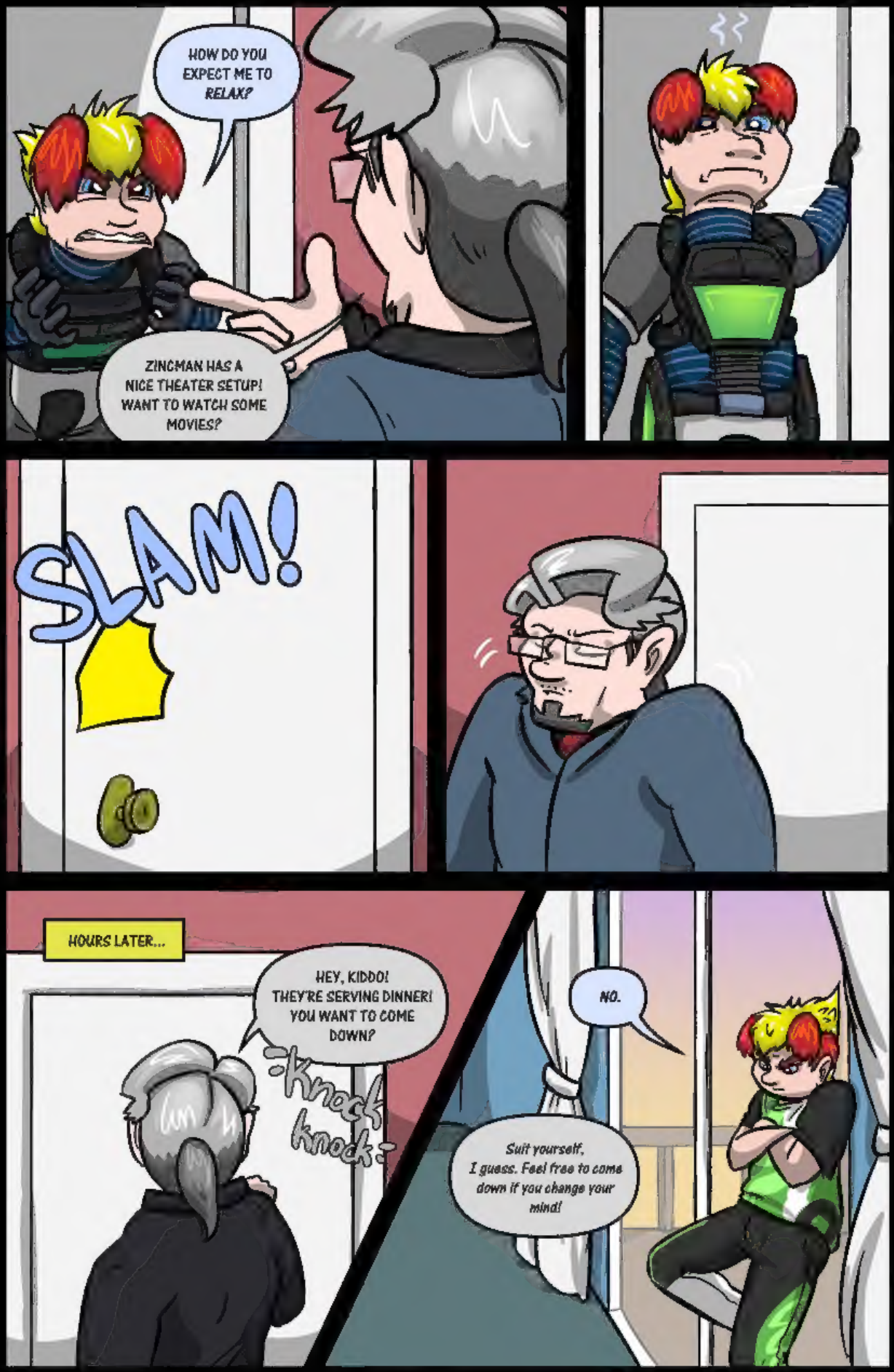
CL- UNK
...Well, that is certainly impressive, Seth! Your robot really fixed this, after all!
I told you! I wouldn't have shown up with just him if he couldn't do it!
WELL, THIS IS HELPING WITH MY CONFIDENCE IN YOU! IF YOUR TECHNICIAN CAN FIX EDEN, MAYBE WE'LL HAVE MORE TALKS AFTER ALL!
NO WORRIES, SHE'S QUICK! SHE'LL HAVE IT PATCHED IN NO TIME!

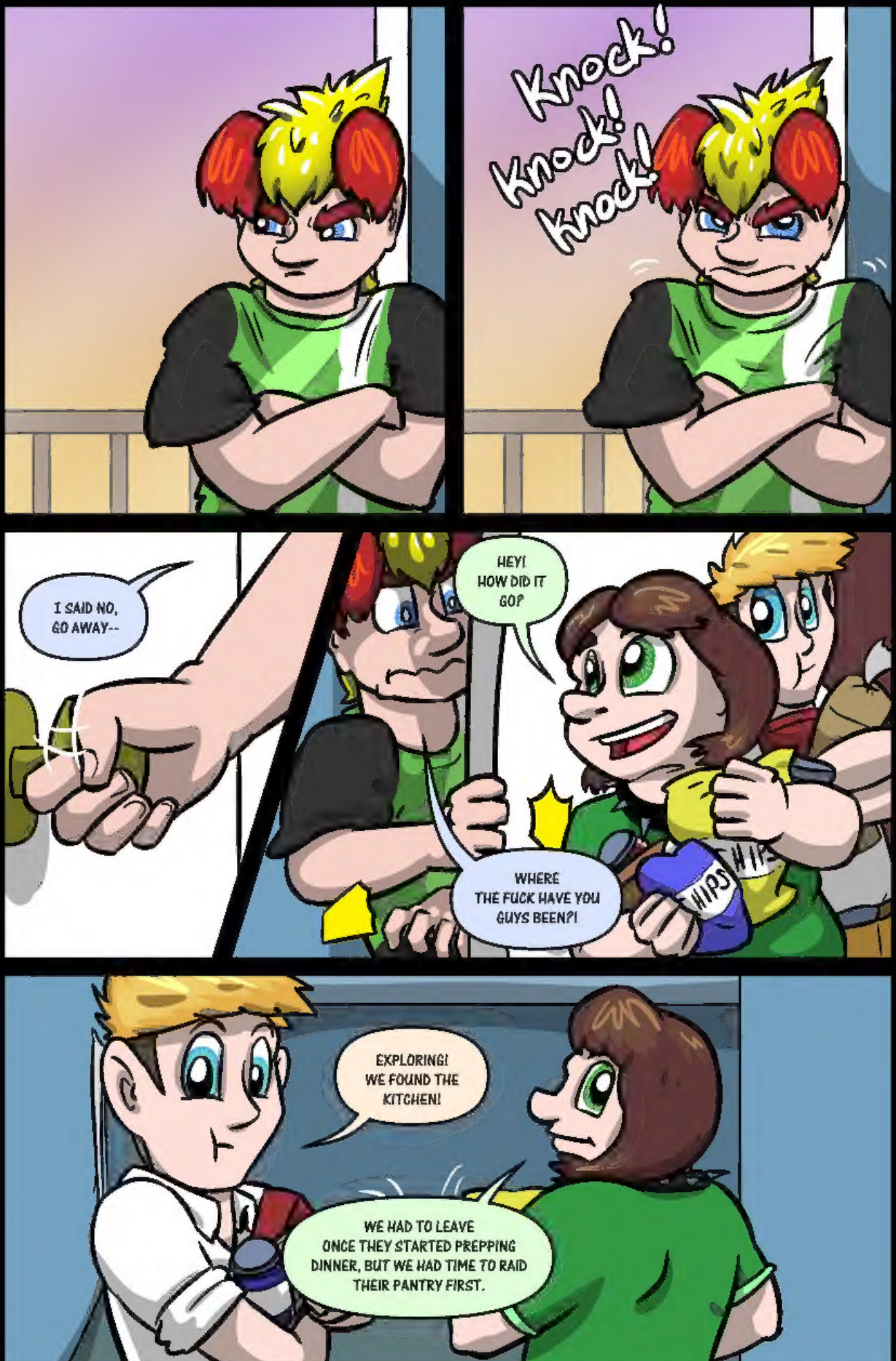
TERRY! GREAT JOB!
HAZARD, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING--
IT CAN WAIT.
IT'S PERFORMED MARVELOUSLY WELL, I'LL BE ABLE TO RESUME PRODUCTION SOON!
GOOD TO HEAR! IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED HANDLED WHILE WE'RE HERE, DON'T HESITATE TO ASK!
HAZARD--
TERRY.
WHY DON'T YOU HEAD BACK TO YOUR ROOM AND GET SOME REST, I'LL COME FIND YOU LATER.

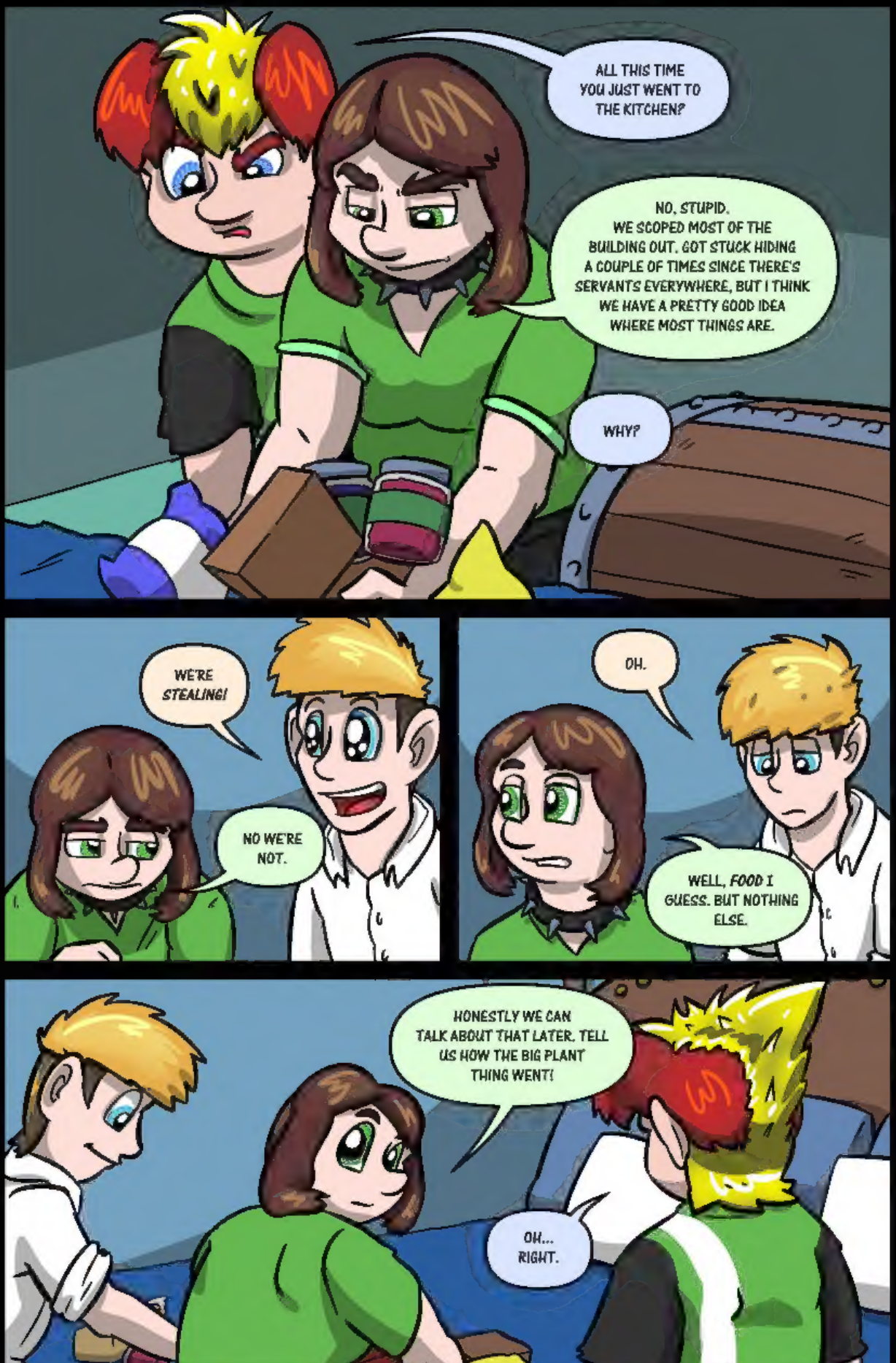
CLICK
GUYS?
CHRIST, WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
Tap Tap Tap
Brrnnn!
FUCK'S SAKE, SHE DIDN'T TAKE HER PHONE!

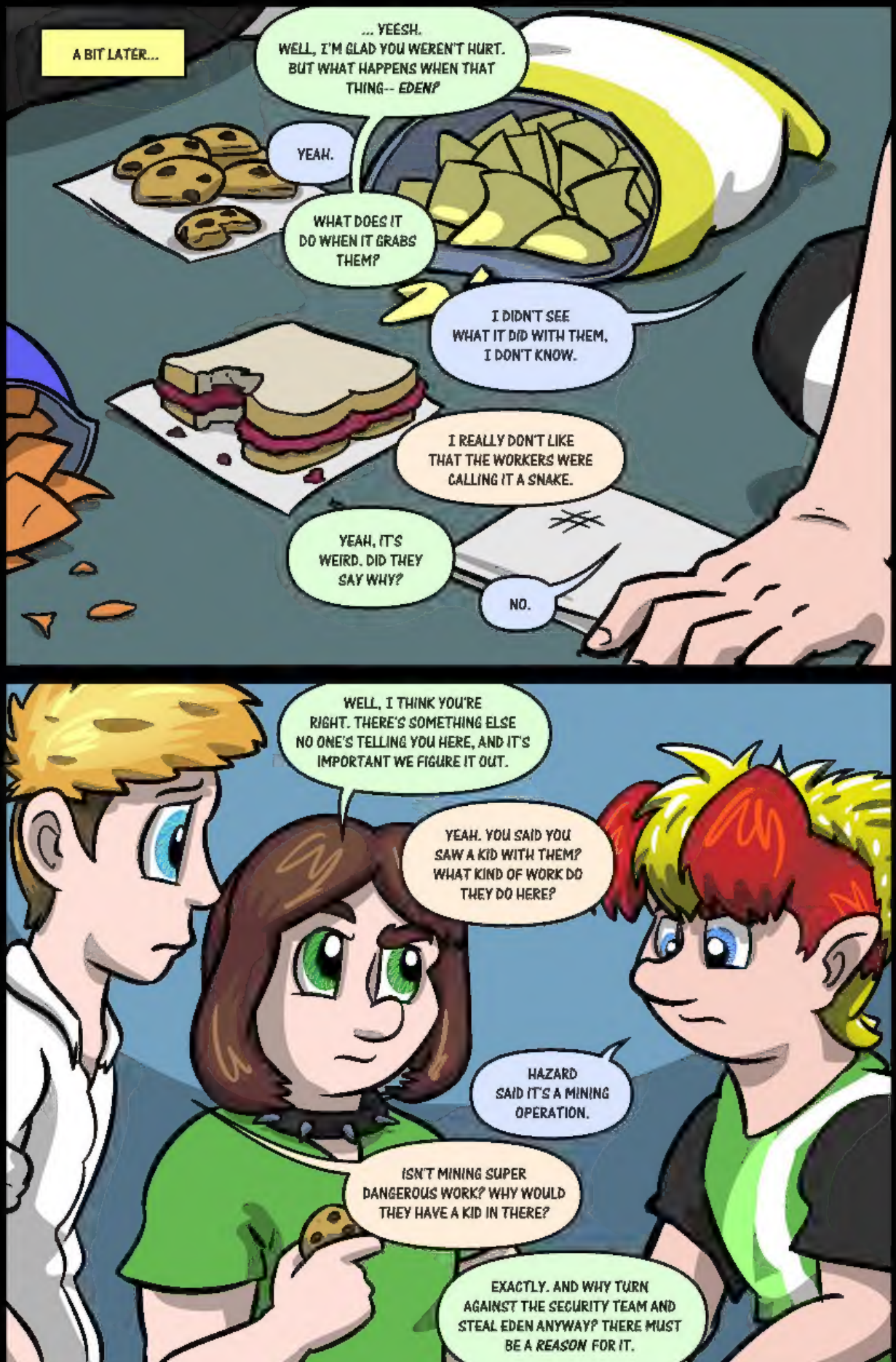
NATALY-AH!
HEY!
I GOT DONE WITH ZINCY-BOY FASTER THAN I THOUGHT! JUST WANTED TO SAY WHAT A GOOD JOB YOU DID!
GOT TO BE HONEST, I WAS NERVOUS SENDING YOU IN THERE, BUT YOU'VE REALLY PROVED YOURSELF TODAY!
UH, THANKS--
SO HOW DID IT GO? THEY TRY TO GET YOU?
"GET?"
HURT.
THEY DIDN'T MANAGE, LOOKS LIKE! NOT A SCRATCH ON YOU!
JOHANNA WILL BE PROUD OF HOW WELL YOU'VE DONE! I'LL SEND HER AN EMAIL TONIGHT--
HAZARD--
CALL ME SETH, KID.
NO.
WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM NOW?
WHO?
THOSE WORKERS.

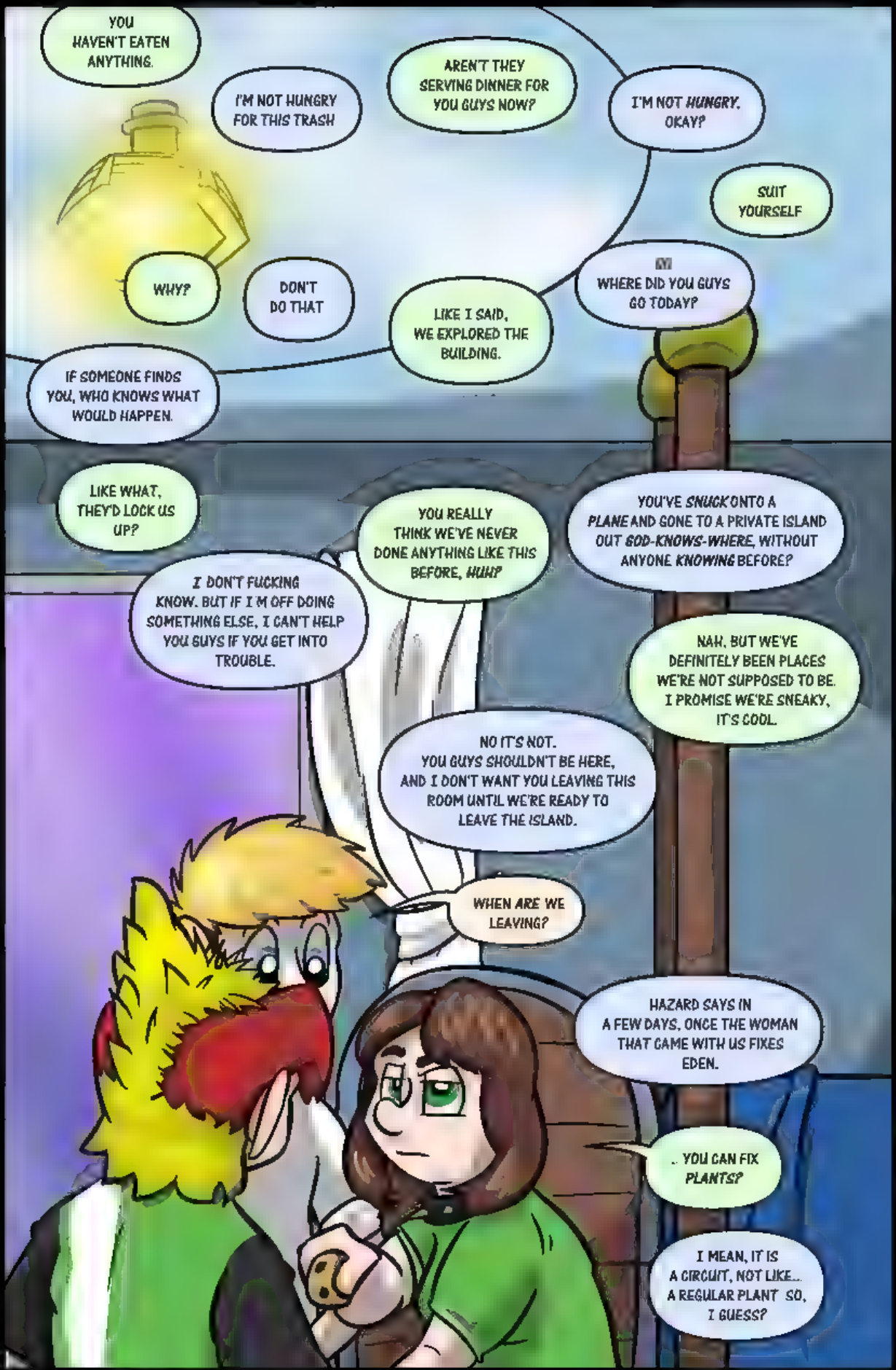
OH? I SUPPOSE ZINCMAN IS GOING TO GET HIS SECURITY TEAM RESTOCKED.
EDEN APPEARS TO BE RESUMING NORMAL FUNCTIONALITY, AND STEPHANIE WILL BE SPENDING THE NEXT FEW DAYS FIXING WHATEVER EXPLOIT THEY USED TO CONTROL HER.
ONCE THAT'S WORKING, ZINCMAN SAYS THEY'LL ALL GET BACK TO WORK.
BACK TO *WORK*? AREN'T THEY *KILLERS*?
I AGREE, I WOULDN'T KEEP THEM AROUND EITHER! BUT ZINCMAN SAYS THEY'VE PUT HIM BEHIND ALL HIS SHIPMENTS, AND--
IF THEY'VE KILLED PEOPLE, THEN KEEPING THEM HERE AS WORKERS IS DANGEROUS.
UNLESS THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME--
LISTEN.
WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM ISN'T OUR BUSINESS. HELPING OUR CLIENT *IS*.
YOU DID GOOD WORK OUT THERE TODAY, SO YOUR JOB HERE IS DONE. WE'LL BE HERE A FEW MORE DAYS, MAYBE A WEEK WHILE STEPH REPAIRS EDEN. TRY TO RELAX IN THAT TIME.

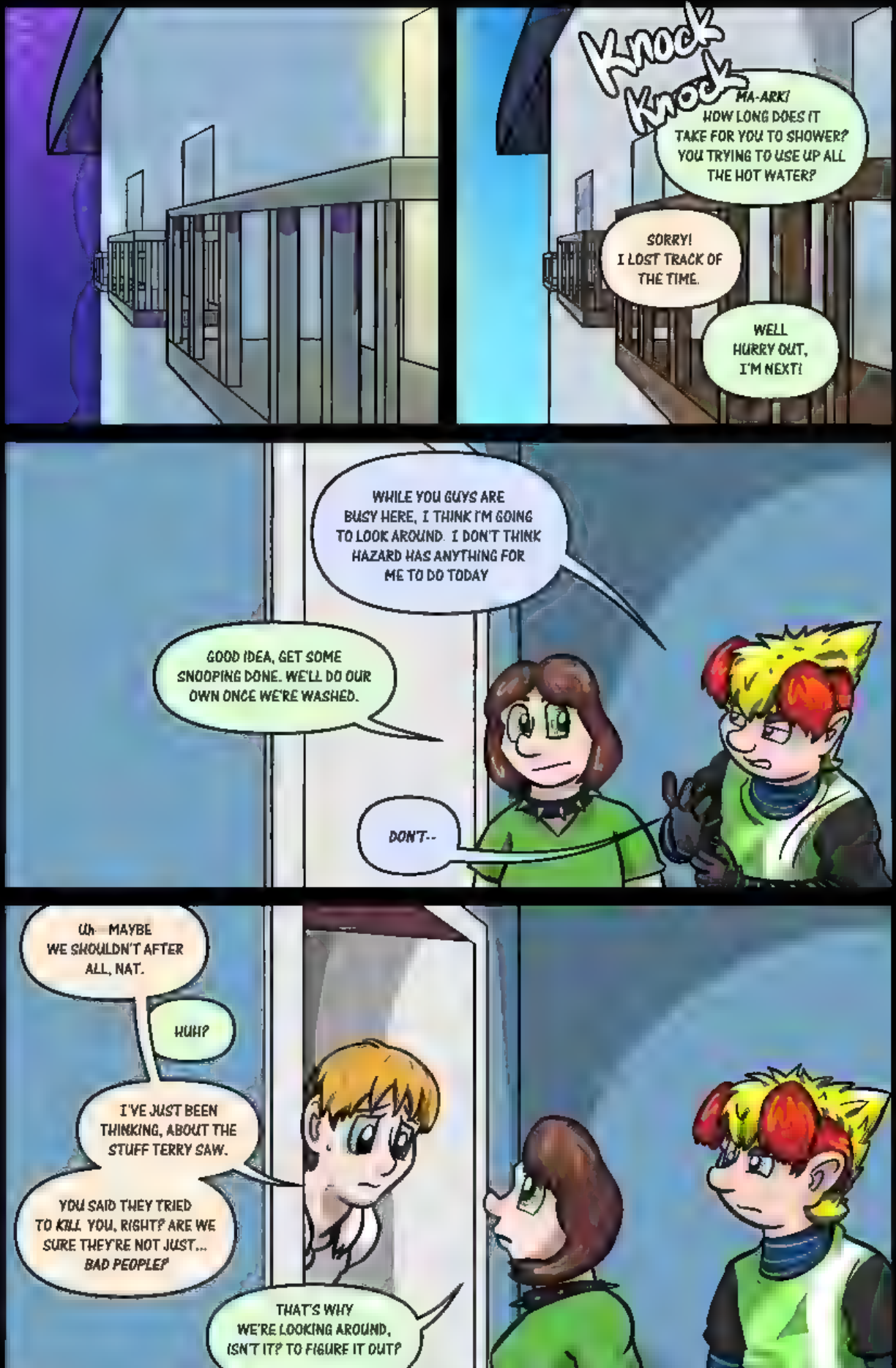

HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO *RELAX?*
ZINCMAN HAS A NICE THEATER SETUP! WANT TO WATCH SOME MOVIES?
SLAM!
HOURS LATER...
HEY, KIDDO! THEY'RE SERVING DINNER! YOU WANT TO COME DOWN?
-Knock knock-
NO.
Suit yourself, I guess. Feel free to come down if you change your mind!


Knock!
Knock!
Knock!
I SAID NO, GO AWAY--
HEY! HOW DID IT GO?
WHERE THE FUCK HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN?!
WHIPS
EXPLORING! WE FOUND THE KITCHEN!
WE HAD TO LEAVE ONCE THEY STARTED PREPPING DINNER, BUT WE HAD TIME TO RAID THEIR PANTRY FIRST.


ALL THIS TIME YOU JUST WENT TO THE KITCHEN?
NO, STUPID. WE SCOPED MOST OF THE BUILDING OUT. GOT STUCK HIDING A COUPLE OF TIMES SINCE THERE'S SERVANTS EVERYWHERE, BUT I THINK WE HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA WHERE MOST THINGS ARE.
WHY?
WE'RE STEALING!
NO WE'RE NOT.
OH.
WELL, FOOD I GUESS. BUT NOTHING ELSE.
HONESTLY WE CAN TALK ABOUT THAT LATER. TELL US HOW THE BIG PLANT THING WENT!
OH... RIGHT.


A BIT LATER...
... YEESH. WELL, I'M GLAD YOU WEREN'T HURT. BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THAT THING-- EDEN?
YEAH.
WHAT DOES IT DO WHEN IT GRABS THEM?
I DIDN'T SEE WHAT IT DID WITH THEM. I DON'T KNOW.
I REALLY DON'T LIKE THAT THE WORKERS WERE CALLING IT A SNAKE.
YEAH, IT'S WEIRD. DID THEY SAY WHY?
NO.
WELL, I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE NO ONE'S TELLING YOU HERE, AND IT'S IMPORTANT WE FIGURE IT OUT.
YEAH. YOU SAID YOU SAW A KID WITH THEM? WHAT KIND OF WORK DO THEY DO HERE?
HAZARD SAID IT'S A MINING OPERATION.
ISN'T MINING SUPER DANGEROUS WORK? WHY WOULD THEY HAVE A KID IN THERE?
EXACTLY. AND WHY TURN AGAINST THE SECURITY TEAM AND STEAL EDEN ANYWAY? THERE MUST BE A REASON FOR IT.


YOU HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING.
I'M NOT HUNGRY FOR THIS TRASH
AREN'T THEY SERVING DINNER FOR YOU GUYS NOW?
I'M NOT *HUNGRY*, OKAY?
SUIT YOURSELF
WHY?
DON'T DO THAT
LIKE I SAID, WE EXPLORED THE BUILDING.
HEY! WHERE DID YOU GUYS GO TODAY?
IF SOMEONE FINDS YOU, WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.
LIKE WHAT, THEY'D LOCK US UP?
YOU REALLY THINK WE'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, *HUH?*
YOU'VE *SNUCK* ONTO A *PLANE* AND GONE TO A PRIVATE ISLAND OUT *GOD-KNOWS-WHERE*, WITHOUT ANYONE *KNOWING* BEFORE?
I DON'T FUCKING KNOW. BUT IF I'M OFF DOING SOMETHING ELSE, I CAN'T HELP YOU GUYS IF YOU GET INTO TROUBLE.
NAH, BUT WE'VE DEFINITELY BEEN PLACES WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE. I PROMISE WE'RE SNEAKY, IT'S COOL.
NO IT'S NOT. YOU GUYS SHOULDN'T BE HERE, AND I DON'T WANT YOU LEAVING THIS ROOM UNTIL WE'RE READY TO LEAVE THE ISLAND.
WHEN ARE WE LEAVING?
HAZARD SAYS IN A FEW DAYS, ONCE THE WOMAN THAT CAME WITH US FIXES EDEN.
.. YOU CAN FIX *PLANTS?*
I MEAN, IT IS A CIRCUIT, NOT LIKE... A REGULAR PLANT SO, I GUESS?


Knock Knock
MA-ARK!
HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR YOU TO SHOWER? YOU TRYING TO USE UP ALL THE HOT WATER?
SORRY! I LOST TRACK OF THE TIME.
WELL HURRY OUT, I'M NEXT!
WHILE YOU GUYS ARE BUSY HERE, I THINK I'M GOING TO LOOK AROUND. I DON'T THINK HAZARD HAS ANYTHING FOR ME TO DO TODAY
GOOD IDEA, GET SOME SNOOPING DONE. WE'LL DO OUR OWN ONCE WE'RE WASHED.
DON'T--
Uh... MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T AFTER ALL, NAT.
HUH?
I'VE JUST BEEN THINKING, ABOUT THE STUFF TERRY SAW.
YOU SAID THEY TRIED TO KILL YOU, RIGHT? ARE WE SURE THEY'RE NOT JUST... BAD PEOPLE?
THAT'S WHY WE'RE LOOKING AROUND, ISN'T IT? TO FIGURE IT OUT?

I JUST...
OKAY. HERE'S THE THING.
THEY TRIED TO *KILL* TERRY! THEY DIDN'T KNOW *WHY* HE WAS THERE, BUT STILL TRIED TO *KILL* HIM.
I JUST... I DON'T THINK A *GOOD* PERSON DOES THAT *GOOD* PEOPLE DON'T *KILL* OTHER PEOPLE.
WHAT DO YOU *MEAN.*
I MEAN WHAT I SAID! IF THEY'RE KILLING PEOPLE, THEN MAYBE THEY DESERVE WHATEVER'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU HAVE TO BE PRETTY MESSED UP TO ACTUALLY TRY TO KILL SOMEO
BUT WHEN IT BENEFITS *YOU*, IT'S *OKAY, HUH?!*
Whut?
SHOULD I HAVE *JUST LET YOU DIE?* WOULD THAT MAKE YOU *HAPPY?!*
...*OH!* NO, I DIDN'T MEAN--
I M SORRY
NO, NATALYA S RIGHT SOMETHING WEIRD IS GOING ON AND WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT IT IS.
ALSO, *FUCK YOU* MARK.
N-Noooo..

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I'M MAD. IT'S NOT LIKE I KILLED GABRIEL.
... BUT IT SURE AS HELL LOOKS THAT WAY. HUH?
BREYKEN, COULD YOU MOVE TO THE SOUTH, OVERLOOKING THE CANOPIES?
WHY?
I WOULD LIKE TO OBSERVE THE CURRENT SITUATION
THE DROSERESQUE IS NO LONGER COVERING THEIR LIVING QUARTERS.
IF YOU ARE CURIOUS OF THEIR MOTIVES, PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TRY SPEAKING WITH THEM
WORTH A SHOT, I GUESS.

CAN I GO IN HERE?
HM? ZINCMAN SAY YOU NEED TO BE DOWN HERE?
UH
YES.
GO AHEAD, TRY NOT TO PICK ANY FIGHTS THEY'RE STILL PISSY.
THEY DON'T HAVE THEIR GUNS ANYMORE, RIGHT?
WE TOOK ALL THEIR WEAPONS BUT THEY AREN'T RESTRAINED, JUST SITTING AROUND IN THEIR COTS.
CONFISCATE ANYTHING WE MISSED AND BRING THEM BACK TO ME. SHOULDN'T BE GUNS THOUGH, MAYBE THE ODD KNIFE.
UH, OKAY

Creeeak
.. DON'T KNOW ELIJAH LOST HIS ARM, BUT THE DOC'S TAKING CARE OF HIM.
WHAT ABOUT FRANK?
SNAKE GOT HIM. SAW IT HAPPEN
GOD. WE WERE SO CLOSE, TOO.
THAT FUCKING KID. WE WOULD HAVE HAD IT IF NOT FOR HIM
IF I SEE HIM AGAIN, I'LL
Shh! DON'T TALK LIKE THAT. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS.
I'M SO SICK OF THESE HAZARD TECH MONSTERS
Shh!

We'll figure something out, I'm sure.
Fuck it I'm done

UH, HI
THE F-- GET OUT OF HERE!
I'M LOOKING FOR THE KID THAT WAS WITH YOU GUYS. I THINK HIS NAME MIGHT HAVE BEEN JAY?
Don't tell me that fucking kid is back.
HE'S BACK.
YOU GOT SOME NERVE
Eughh--!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO SIT UP! TAKE IT EASY!

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR--
YOU HAPPENED, YOU DIRTY
EASY, ELIJAH! DON'T WORK YOURSELF UP!
THE SNAKE GRABBED HIM, BUT HE WAS LUCKY.
LUCKY? HOW IS THAT LUCKY?
HE ISN'T DEAD.
DOES EDEN KILL PEOPLE?
WOULD SOMEONE GET HIM OUT OF HERE?!
CALM DOWN!
HOW ABOUT YOU GET OUT OF HERE?
I'M LOOKING FOR THAT KID WHO HAD THE LAPTOP. IF YOU TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND HIM, I'LL LEAVE.
HOPEFULLY HE'S SOMEWHERE SAFE.
SO YOU DON'T KNOW?

CHRIST, YOUR HAIR SURE IS FUCKING BRIGHT IN THE LIGHT
UH. THANKS?
YOU'RE WELCOME. NOW BEAT IT
I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS
WE TOLD YOU WE DON'T KNOW WHERE JAY IS. YOU SAID YOU'D LEAVE.
YOU TOLD HIM TO GO SOMEWHERE. I SAW IT.
AND?
LISTEN. I'M HERE BECAUSE I THINK I'VE BEEN LIED TO ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON HERE. BUT I CAN'T KNOW FOR SURE UNLESS I GET YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY.
WHY SHOULD I CARE IF YOU'VE BEEN LIED TO? I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT YOUR FUCKING FEELINGS.
YOU'RE STUCK HERE.
"STUCK," HE SAYS
ZINCMAN WON'T LET YOU LEAVE. SO YOU'RE STUCK.
THAT'S RIGHT, ISN'T IT?

PLEASE. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. IF I'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG, I WANT TO HELP.
Sch!
Shh!
ARE YOU STUPID?
HUH?
You see that thing? It listens to everything we say.
So shut your mouth about whatever the hell you're about to say
Listens? How?
We don't know how. We just know it does.
So we aren't saying anything to you. Just because you don't see it around, doesn't mean it doesn't hear what you're saying.
If you want to talk, you're going to have to find someone who can go where the Snake can't - which isn't here.
Don't say that!
But now that Eden's been reset, doesn't it cover the entire island?
Bingo.
Well who do I--
JUST GET HIM OUT OF HERE ALREADY, COLT

THIS LOOKS LIKE THE ONE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, IT LOOKS LIKE AN OFFICE. GOOD WORK.
LET'S SEE, IF THE WORKERS HERE HAD SOME REASON TO TURN EDEN AGAINST THE HOUSE, SURELY THERE'S A PAPER-TRAIL OF IT HERE.
I LOCKED THE DOOR, I'M GOING TO CHECK FOR SOME HIDING SPOTS, IN CASE ANYONE TRIES COMING IN.
SOUNDS GOOD, I'LL START WITH THE FILE CABINATES.

.. HEY, NAT?
YEAH?
DO YOU THINK TERRY HATES ME?
NO
BUT. I FEEL LIKE I MAKE HIM MAD A LOT.
HE'S ALWAYS MOODY. AND I DON'T THINK HE REALLY WANTS TO TALK ABOUT GABRIEL.
I SURE DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT GABE
ASK HIM LATER IF YOU'RE GOING TO BEAT YOURSELF UP ABOUT IT. HE WON'T LIE TO YOU.
I CAN'T JUST ASK HIM!
WHY NOT?
HE WOULDN'T-- HOW DO YOU KNOW HE WOULDN'T LIE?
BECAUSE HE'S A TERRIBLE LIAR AND HE KNOWS WE KNOW THAT.
WE WERE THE FIRST ONES TO KNOW HE HAD POWERS, AND HE TOLD US EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED WITH HIS MOM. WHY WOULD HE SHARE THAT IF HE DIDN'T LIKE YOU?

... BECAUSE I JUST HAPPENED TO SEE HIM USE HIS POWERS AND HE NEEDED TO EXPLAIN THAT.
HE DIDN'T HAVE TO TELL US ALL HIS SECRETS. BUT HE DID. AND WE'RE STILL HANGING OUT WITH HIM.
YOU'RE GOLDEN
BUT HE WAS MAD WHEN WE CAME HERE WITH [illegible]
AND HAPPY WHEN WE SURPRISED HIM AT HIS APARTMENT. [illegible]
LOOK, IF YOU'RE REALLY BOTHERED, WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT LATER. BUT YOU'RE CHATTING A LOT WHEN YOU JUST SAID YOU WERE PICKING OUT HIDING SPOTS.
. . OH! RIGHT. SORRY!

EDEN? CAN YOU HEAR ME?
TAKEO, DO YOU THINK THIS THING ACTUALLY LISTENS?
I AM ALSO CURIOUS OF THE DROSERESQUE'S CAPABILITIES, BUT AM IGNORANT AT THIS MOMENT.
I QUESTION WHETHER HAZARD HAS AN AI COMPETENT IN HUMAN SPEECH, BUT WE HAVE NO DATA. IF IT HAS AUDITORY SENSORS AND RECORDERS, PERHAPS A HUMAN IS LISTENING TO THEIR CONVERSATIONS.
I GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE.
BUT HOW WOULD I KNOW WHERE IT'S SAFE TO TALK? THEY SAID TO GO SOMEWHERE EDEN ISN'T
THIS ONE CAME OUT OF THE GROUND. AREN'T THEY ALL CONNECTED TO THE BIG ONE BACK BY THE MANSION?
THAT IS WHAT HAZARD CLAIMS.
HELLOoooooO.
GRRSH
AH!

I GUESS THEY CAN HEAR FROM UNDERGROUND, THEN? OR--
LEAVE THEM. STOP TALKING.
HEAD SOUTH-WEST
IF YOU REMEMBER WHAT WE SAW YESTERDAY, THE BOY CALLED JAY RAN INTO THE JUNGLE, TOWARD THE SOUTH-WEST OF CAMP.
IF WE ENTER THERE, PERHAPS WE WILL FIND SOME TRACKS.
OKAY, GOOD IDEA--
STOP SPEAKING TO ME.
..

THIS IS THE LOCATION. ENTER THE JUNGLE HERE.
WELL IF YOU--
STOP SPEAKING
I'M NOT EVEN ON THE *GROUND* RIGHT NOW, DUDE.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN HEAR ME WHEN I'M *THINKING*, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TALK TO YOU?
IF OUR ARRANGEMENT IS A PROBLEM, I SUGGEST THAT YOU LET ME PILOT YOUR BODY, AND YOU CAN SPEAK FROM WITHIN YOUR MIND
NO!

KLRSH

SOMETHING TROUBLES YOU?
...Yeah, I guess. I can't put my finger on it, but something's weird.
THE DROSERESQUE HAS CERTAINLY MADE ITS HOME HERE
Yeah...
If Eden is all over the jungle, wouldn't it have found Jay and brought him back to camp?
AN ASSUMPTION.
You don't think so?
THE WORKERS BELIEVED THE DROSERESQUE COULD LISTEN TO THEM. THEY MUST HAVE HAD SOME WAY TO COMMUNICATE TO ORGANIZE THEIR PLAN.
PERHAPS A LOCATION IT CANNOT REACH.

Why a location?

HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO GO SOMEWHERE THE VINES WERE NOT. EVEN IN HIS MOST VAGUE, THAT IS A CLUE.

Wait! There's tracks in the mud here!
They look like boots! Don't you think?
THEY APPEAR RECENT, AND A MIX OF SIZES. MORE THAN ONE PERSON CAME THROUGH HERE.
. Boots. Just boots.
ARE THEY NOT SUFFICIENT?
... It's not that.
I think I figured out why this place is so creepy
You remember when we were walking through the jungle after escaping from Amanda's lab? There were all sorts of little animals and bugs.
This place is... quiet.
I know this is a little island in the middle of no where, but shouldn't something be here? Have you seen anything?
I HAVE NOT
I haven't even heard any bugs. It's just... really weird.
WE SHOULD CONTINUE. WE HAVE TRACKS TO FOLLOW NOW

LATER..
WELL, THAT'S IT FOR THE TRACKS. NOW WHAT?
PERHAPS THEY ARE NEARBY
OR MAYBE THEY WALKED ALONG THE BEACH TO *WHO-KNOWS-WHERE*, AND THE TIDE WASHED THE REST OF THEIR FOOTPRINTS AWAY
THEN WALK THE BEACH.
I'M NOT GETTING *THAT CLOSE* TO THE WATER. WHAT IF A BIG WAVE COMES UP? I DON'T WANT TO GET PULLED OUT TO SEA, I CAN'T SWIM.
YOUR LIMITS CONTINUE TO BE UNREASONABLE
YOUR FUCKING *FACE* IS UNREASONABLE
WE SHARE THE SAME FACE.
DON'T SAY THAT
I WILL WARN YOU IF A LARGE WAVE COMES, AND YOU CAN JUMP BACK ON THIS LEDGE TO YOUR PERCEIVED SAFETY
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME DOWN THERE FOR? YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO SOMEHOW SHERLOCK-OUT THEY ALL DOVE INTO THE OCEAN AND *DROWNED* THEMSELVES?

OR PERHAPS THEY WENT TO ONE OF THOSE.
HM?
TO YOUR RIGHT
WHAT, YOU THINK THEY SWAM OUT THERE? THAT'S WAY TO FAR--
OH MY GOD. IS THAT A BOAT?
IT IS A FEASIBLE LOCATION, AS IT IS NOT TOO FAR TO ROW TO.
IF THE DROSERESQUE CAN FIND THEM BY COVERING THE ENTIRE ISLAND, THEY WOULD NEED TO LEAVE IT TO BE SAFE--
OH!
YOU'RE RIGHT! IT LOOKS LIKE EDEN DOESN'T EVER GO INTO THE WATER!
I THINK WE FOUND THEM! BUT HOW DO WE GET THERE? I DON'T SEE ANOTHER BOAT.
OBVIOUSLY YOU SWIM
FUCK THAT.
YOU THINK I COULD JUMP THAT FAR?
YES, IF YOU PLAN TO LAND IN THE WATER AT HALF THE DISTANCE, BUT I AM NOT CONFIDENT YOUR FOOTWORK IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE PROPER RUNNING START.

I CAN GET US ACROSS--
MAYBE THERE IS ANOTHER BOAT SOMEWHERE.
BREYKEN, PLEASE LET ME HELP
WELL, I THINK WE FOUND WHERE THEY KEEP THEIR BOAT WHEN IT'S ON THIS SIDE
NOT SUPER WELL HIDDEN, BUT I BET ZINGMAN'S SECURITY GUARDS DON'T COME THIS FAR INTO THE JUNGLE, ANYWAY

WE COULD BE THERE BY NOW IF YOU WOULD LET ME HELP.
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO SWIM
I GUARANTEE YOU THAT I AM FULLY CAPABLE OF SWIMMING.
YOU'RE 0 FOR TWO WHEN IT COMES TO NOT TRYING TO KILL SOMEONE I LET YOU CONTROL ME.
...WAIT, THERE'S A LIFE JACKET IN HERE.

NO NO NONONO
NO NO NONO NONO NO
NO NONONONO NO!!
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
AAH!
PLEASE NO NO
NOO!!
WE WILL ARRIVE IN
THREE HOURS.
DON'T EVEN
JOKE LIKE THAT!
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
AAAH!!
SPRRSH
KRJSSH
SPLISH!

SLUSH
SLUSH
SLUSH
SLUSH
SLUSH
BZZZT
ALRIGHT. LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A PATH HERE.

KRTCH
SHLK
SHK
SPLASH!

I THINK I'M ONTO SOMETHING HERE! SEE?
BZZZZZZZZZ
THWACK!
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO GET A BUNCH OF SHOTS BEFORE YOU GO TO STRANGE ISLANDS LIKE THIS?
YOU ARE IMMUNE TO DISEASES.
WAIT, *REALLY?*
WE HAVE HAD THIS DISCUSSION BEFORE.
WELL I DON'T REMEMBER IT. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN ASS.
YOUR PASSIVE RECOVERY MODE HANDLES--
WOULD YOU SHUT UP? I'M TRYING TO LISTEN!
...I DON'T HEAR ANYONE.
CONTINUE FOLLOWING THE PATH.
WELL *DUH*, BUT I STILL WANT YOU TO BE *QUIET*

HOW MUCH LONGER 'TIL THE COOKING'S DONE?
ANOTHER HOUR OR SO
I GUESS I'LL HEAD BACK TO CAMP TO TAKE A NAP THEN. COME GET ME IF ANYONE ELSE SHOWS UP ON THE SHORELINE.
YEAH, I'LL JUST WALK ALL THE WAY UP THE DAMN HILL TO WAKE YOUR ASS UP.
JUST SLEEP HERE.
SETTLE DOWN. I DOUBT ANYONE ELSE NEEDS TO CROSS THE WATER ANYWAY. THEY WOULD HAVE SHOWN UP AT THE SHORE BY NOW
AND IF SOMEONE DOES SHOW UP AND YOU AREN'T HERE TO HELP ME ROW OVER FOR THEM?
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL LARS YOU LEFT YOUR POST ON YOUR OWN? SO THEY CAN SIT STRANDED WITH THE SNAKE?
CHRIST. FINE, I'LL STAY, YOU BIG BABY

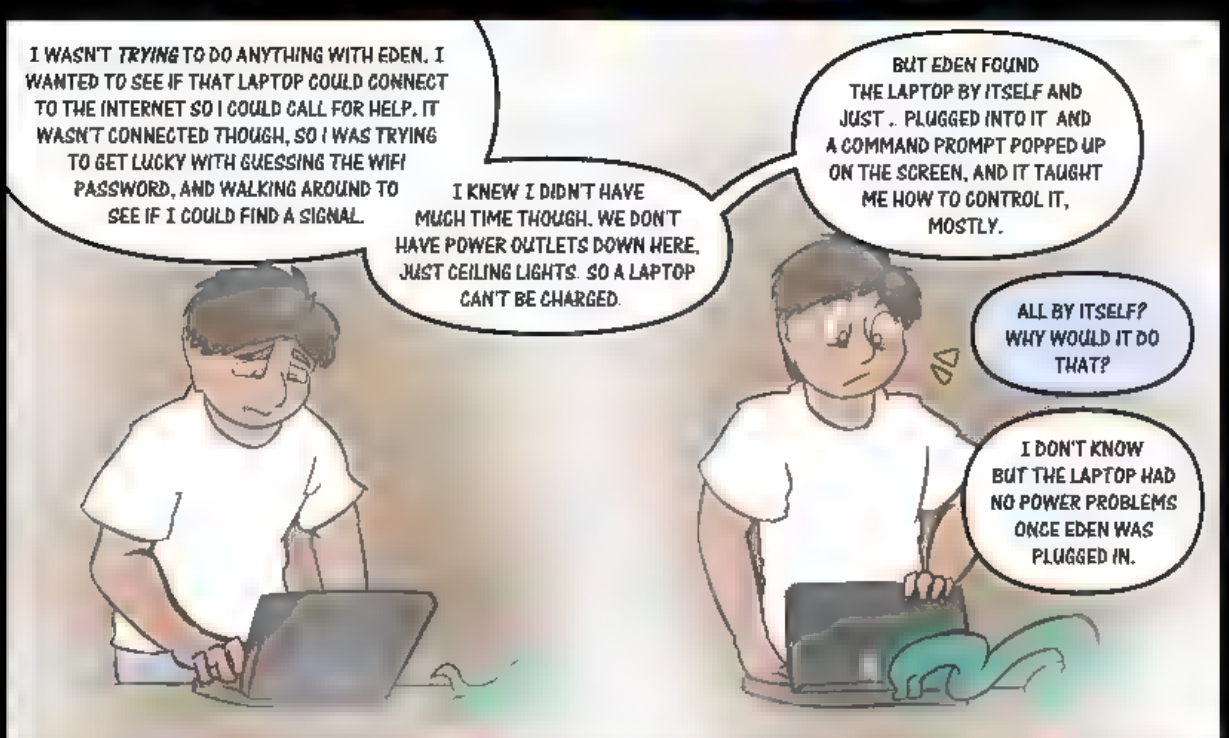
WELL I GUESS THIS IS THE END OF THE ROAD. HOPEFULLY JAY MADE IT HERE.
SO WHAT'S THE MOST AMICABLE WAY TO DO THIS?
THEY SHOULD NOT TRY TO FIGHT YOU AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.
SEE. I WAS THINKING THE EXACT OPPOSITE.
WELL, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH
OH GOD NO, HE FOUND US.
HI, I JUST WANT TO TALK?
...UH. LIKE I SAID LAST TIME?

SLAM
CLICK
CLACK
CLICK
SHRK
BRRM
QUICK, BARRICADE THE D-
FRT
BAM!
FLUSH
CRA-SH!
FLISH
RRK
FRT
MIND IF I COME IN?

WHO TOLD YOU WHERE WE WERE?
NO ONE, I PROMISE. IF YOU TALK TO ME, MAYBE I WON'T TELL ANYONE EITHER.
I WANT TO TALK TO JAY
IT'S A TRICK! HE JUST WANTS US TO CONFESS SO HE CAN KEEP THE SNAKE AWAY FROM US!
NO, THEY ALREADY HAVE IT BACK. WITHOUT THAT LAPTOP, WE CAN'T GET IT BACK. IT'S OVER.
ANYTHING YOU WANT TO SAY TO JAY, YOU CAN SAY TO US
WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO? AND WITH EDEN?
THAT ELIJAH GUY SAID ZINCMAN WON'T LET YOU LEAVE. IS THAT TRUE?
DID HE REALLY? I SAW IT GRAB HIM, THOUGHT HE WAS A GONNER.
HE'S LOST HIS ARM.
CHRIST .
WELL, I M GLAD HE'S STILL ALIVE. BUT YES, ZINCMAN IS KEEPING US HERE.

SO WHAT'S THE WHOLE STORY?
WE'RE SLAVES. WE WORK THE MINES, WE CAN'T *LEAVE*, WE CAN'T SPEAK TO OUR FAMILIES
SOME OF US WERE "HIRED" TO WORK HERE ONLY TO FIND OUT IT WAS A LIE. OTHERS WERE JUST KIDNAPPED AND BROUGHT HERE
EVEN KIDS?
KIDS ONLY END UP HERE WITH THEIR PARENTS.
JAY WAS BROUGHT HERE WITH HIS FATHER, WHO ISN'T WITH US ANYMORE. I THINK ELIJAH LOOKS AFTER HIM MOSTLY, NOW
SO YOU STOLE EDEN'S LAPTOP TO TRY TO BREAK FREE?
JAY FIGURED IT OUT. HE'S PRETTY GOOD WITH COMPUTERS.

YOU HACKED EDEN?
I M NOT . I MEAN..
IT'S NOT *EDEN'S* LAPTOP, IT'S JUST A LAPTOP


I WASN'T *TRYING* TO DO ANYTHING WITH EDEN. I WANTED TO SEE IF THAT LAPTOP COULD CONNECT TO THE INTERNET SO I COULD CALL FOR HELP. IT WASN'T CONNECTED THOUGH, SO I WAS TRYING TO GET LUCKY WITH GUESSING THE WIFI PASSWORD, AND WALKING AROUND TO SEE IF I COULD FIND A SIGNAL.
I KNEW I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME THOUGH. WE DON'T HAVE POWER OUTLETS DOWN HERE, JUST CEILING LIGHTS. SO A LAPTOP CAN'T BE CHARGED.
BUT EDEN FOUND THE LAPTOP BY ITSELF AND JUST . PLUGGED INTO IT AND A COMMAND PROMPT POPPED UP ON THE SCREEN, AND IT TAUGHT ME HOW TO CONTROL IT, MOSTLY.
ALL BY ITSELF? WHY WOULD IT DO THAT?
I DON'T KNOW BUT THE LAPTOP HAD NO POWER PROBLEMS ONCE EDEN WAS PLUGGED IN.

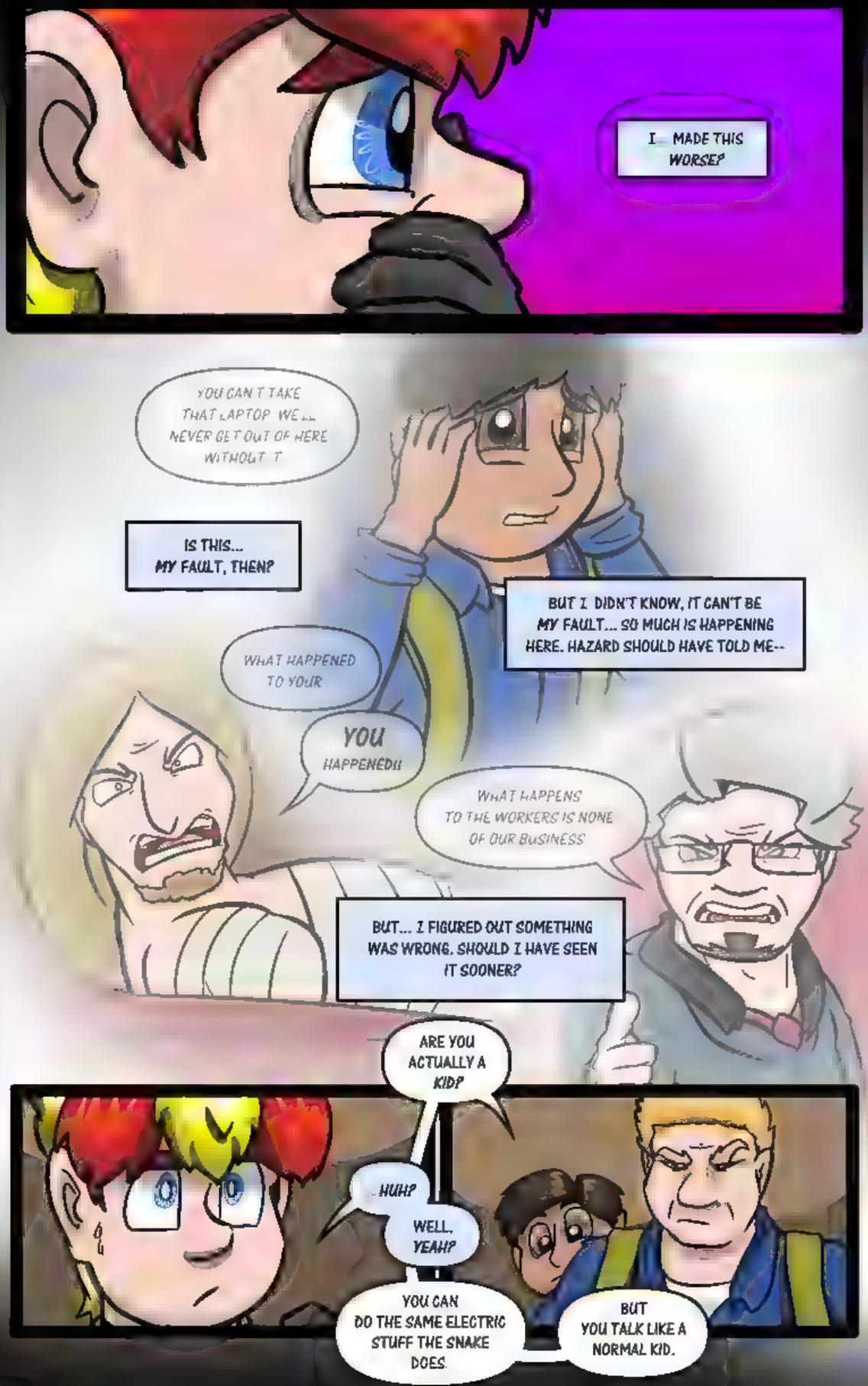
I SUSPECT THAT IS NOT AN INTENDED FEATURE OF THE DROSERESQUE. IT MUST BE THE EXPLOIT HAZARD'S TECHNICIAN IS WORKING TO FIX.
MANY CIRCUITS ARE DESIGNED TO SENSE ENERGY SOURCES TO LEECH FROM IT LIKELY FOUND THE LAPTOP FOR THIS PURPOSE, BUT SHARED ITS SUPPLY INSTEAD, MISTAKENING THE LAPTOP FOR A CONTROL CONSOLE ONCE ATTACHED
ASK HOW THEY GOT THE LAPTOP
HOW DID YOU GET THE LAPTOP?
ONE OF THE SERVANTS AT THE HOUSE GOT IT FOR ME. THEY'RE IN THE SAME SITUATION AS US.
THAT'S RIGHT WOMEN ARE KEPT IN THE HOUSE, MEN ARE PUT IN THE MINES. DOESN'T MATTER HOW CAPABLE YOU ARE AT EITHER JOB, SO WE GET KIDS SOMETIMES.
I M SORRY..
NOTHING TO BE SORRY ABOUT

HOW'S YOUR END GOING?
I FOUND THE WAGES FOR THE SECURITY TEAM, BUT NOT FOR THE MINERS
I HAVEN'T FOUND THEIR WAGES EITHER. I FOUND SOME RECORDS OF WHEN EVERYONE STARTED WORKING HERE THOUGH
EVERYONE?
YEAH. THE SECURITY TEAM, THE MINERS, THE SERVANTS
IF THOSE ARE KEPT TOGETHER, I'M NOT SURE WHY IT'S SO HARD TO FIND THE OTHER WAGES.
CLICK CLACK
CLICK CLICK
CREEAK

... OH. I THOUGHT HE WASN'T GOING TO BE IN HIS OFFICE TODAY?!
OH GEEZE, ISN'T THIS THE WING THAT NEEDS CLEANING TODAY? I GUESS I'LL GO DOUBLE CHECK THE SCHEDULE
UM. MAYBE WE SHOULD GO BACK TO TERRY'S ROOM BEFORE SHE COMES BACK.
BUT WE HAVEN'T FOUND ANYTHING YET!
WELL, WHAT IF NOT FINDING SOMETHING IS WHAT WE NEEDED TO FIND?
WE WON'T KNOW UNTIL WE FINISH, THOUGH!
THERE'S ALWAYS TOMORROW, WHEN IT ISN'T CLEANING DAY!
TOMORROW MIGHT BE "HE'S IN HIS OFFICE ALL DAY" DAY, THOUGH.
IT COULD BE, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THAT GIRL IS GOING TO COME RIGHT BACK REALLY SOON
FINE. LET'S GO.

SO ONCE YOU HAD EDEN UNDER YOUR CONTROL, YOU WANTED TO TRY TO CONVINCE ZINCMAN TO LET YOU ALL GO, RIGHT?
RIGHT
AND YOU USED IT TO STEAL GUNS FROM THE SECURITY TEAM?
"SECURITY TEAM" IS TOO PRETTY A WORD. THEY'RE *MERCENARIES* ZINCMAN HIRED TO KEEP US IN LINE.
THEY'RE *MURDERERS*.
IT TOOK MONTHS TO ORGANIZE THE WHOLE THING, ONCE JAY GOT CONTROL. WE STARTED WITH JUST TAKING A FEW OF THEIR SPARE GUNS FROM STORAGE, SO NO ONE WOULD NOTICE AT FIRST.
STOCKPILED EXTRA FOOD TAKEN FROM STORAGE, STUFF THAT WON'T GO BAD EASY. ONCE WE HAD ENOUGH, WE HAD THE SNAKE GRAB ALL THE REST OF THE GUNS AT ONCE. RIPPED THEM OUT OF THEIR HANDS, EVEN.
THEN THE WALL WENT UP, AND WE GAVE ZINCMAN OUR DEMANDS.
OCCASIONALLY, THEY'D GET THE WALL OPENED FOR A FEW SECONDS AND TRY TO GET IN, BUT JAY WAS ALWAYS FAST ENOUGH TO GET IT BACK UP. SO WE'D JUST CLEAN HOUSE WITH ANYONE THAT GOT THROUGH

SO YOU HAVE KILLED PEOPLE?
WE KILLED MEN SENT IN TO KILL US, WHO HAVE KILLED US BEFORE. AND I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.
MERCS GET WHAT THEY DESERVE. YOU WANT TO PLAY SOLDIER AND TORTURE PEOPLE FOR YOUR JOLLIES UNDER SOME RICH PRICK? THEN THE WATER WON'T PART FOR YOU WHEN THE DAM BREAKS.
I... GUESS.
YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
I .. DON'T KNOW. I GUESS NOT.
SO YOU WERE JUST WAITING FOR ZIMMAN TO GIVE IN?
PRETTY MUCH. I'M SURE AFTER A FEW MORE WEEKS, HE'D CRACK. WE TOLD HIM THAT PRETTY HOUSE OF HIS WAS COMING DOWN IF HE DIDN'T
..BUT THEN YOU SHOWED UP.
YOU SINGLE-HANDEDLY STOLE THE FREEDOM WE'VE BEEN HOLDING OUT YEARS TO GET BACK, RIGHT WHEN IT WAS IN ARM'S REACH.


I... MADE THIS WORSE?
YOU CAN'T TAKE THAT LAPTOP. WE... NEVER GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT IT.
IS THIS... MY FAULT, THEN?
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW, IT CAN'T BE MY FAULT... SO MUCH IS HAPPENING HERE. HAZARD SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME--
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR
YOU HAPPENED!!
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE WORKERS IS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS
BUT... I FIGURED OUT SOMETHING WAS WRONG. SHOULD I HAVE SEEN IT SOONER?
ARE YOU ACTUALLY A KID?
..HUH?
WELL, YEAH?
YOU CAN DO THE SAME ELECTRIC STUFF THE SNAKE DOES.
BUT YOU TALK LIKE A NORMAL KID.

AND I DIDN'T KNOW EDEN CAN DO ELECTRIC STUFF TOO
Y YEAH, IT CAN. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO IT WITH THE LAPTOP, BUT WE'VE... SEEN IT BUT YOU CAN DO IT, AND YOU CAN'T BE A ROBOT YOU CAN TALK
JAY, I KEEP TELLING YOU, THE SNAKE AIN'T A ROBOT NEITHER.
BUT I WAS CONTROLLING IT! WITH THE LAPTOP!
I KNOW
SO KID. YOU'RE WITH HAZARD, AREN'T YOU?
YOU KNOW HIM?
HIM? I'M TALKING HAZARD TECH. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO BROUGHT THE SNAKE IN.
I WORK FOR THEM, YEAH BUT I JUST STARTED I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT ZINCMAN IS DOING.
AND... WHY DO YOU KEEP CALLING IT A SNAKE? IT'S A PLANT.
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
YEAH. IT HAS A BIG FLOWER AT THE BASE. I GET THE ROBOT IDEA, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY A BIG PLANT
IT AIN'T A PLANT, NO MATTER HOW MANY FUCKING FLOWERS IT HAS
WELL WHY THE HELL NOT?
BECAUSE IT BLEEDS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT BLEEDS?
THAT THING'S NO MORE A FLOWER THAN I AM. CUT THROUGH ONE OF ITS VINES WITH A SHOVEL OR PICK AND YOU SEE IT'S MADE OF MEAT.
IT'S JUST DISGUISED LIKE A PLANT TO TRICK YOU AND CAMOUFLAGE. IT'S AS COLD- BLOODED WAS A PYTHON.
THEY TOLD ME IT'S A SECURITY CIRC--
UH, PLANT
THERE'S THAT PRETTY WORD AGAIN. IF BY "SECURITY" YOU MEAN IT LISTENS TO EVERYTHING WE SAY AND DISAPPEARS PEOPLE FOR SPEAKING TOO POORLY OF THE SITUATION, THEN YEAH, SURE. THAT'S SECURITY
AS IF! IT JUST GRABS SOMEONE WHENEVER IT'S HUNGRY! THE DAMN THING ALREADY ATE ALL THE CRITTERS ON THE ISLAND!
IT... ATE THE ANIMALS ON THE ISLAND?
IT EATS WHATEVER IT CAN GRAB.
IT .. EATS PEOPLE?
WHEN IT THINKS NO ONE'S LOOKING. YES.
THAT CAN'T NO ONE TOLD ME THAT
WHATEVER THEY DID TELL YOU, THIS ISN'T SOME PETTY SQUABBLE WITH OUR BOSS
WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE HERE IN ENOUGH TIME. IT WAS BAD BEFORE THE SNAKE GOT HERE, BUT THE CLOCK IS RUNNING OUT FOR ALL OF US NOW.

THIS MAKES MORE SENSE THAN WHAT HAZARD EXPLAINED. THE DROSERESQUE WOULD NEED A POWER SUPPLY TO MAINTAIN SUCH A LARGE SIZE.
POWER SUPPLY?
HM?
SPEAK WITH ME LATER
CHRIST, THE SNAKE'S HERE!
RUN!
GET TO THE CABIN. THE GUNS ARE THERE!
NO, IDIOT! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT'S WHERE IT'S GOING?!
WHAT?! WHY IS IT IGNORING US?!
HOW LONG HAS [illegible] BEEN HERE?
ABOUT SIX MONTHS
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
PERSONALLY? LONG ENOUGH TO STOP TRACKING

CRASH!
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT--?!
CRASH!
IT FOUND US!!
YOU LED IT HERE!
I--

IT'S HERE!
GRAB THE GUNS!
IT'S BLOCKING THE DOOR!
GET THE BIG ONE!
MOVE!
WAIT
WAIT
WAIT
FASTER THAN THAT.

GET THE KID FREE!
DON'T LET IT BEHIND YOU!
BACKS TOGETHER!
AIM FOR THE BASE OF THE HEAD!
GAH!
SHUNK
IT'S GOT JOHN!
BECAUSE IT EATS PEOPLE!!
Rat-tat-tat
OH MY GOD, WHY DOES IT HAVE TEETH?!

STOMP!
SPLURT!
KRREEE!
RATATAT
RATARAT
RATATA
J-JESUS... IT REALLY ISN'T A PLANT, IS IT?
IT'S LEAVING?
ONLY THE INJURED HEAD. ASSIST THE MINERS WITH THE REST.
RIGHT

THWOMP!
Hrngh!
GAH!
WHAT'S IT DOING TO MY SUIT?
IT SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO ELECTROCUTE ITS VICTIM. YOUR SUIT IS INTERCEPTING THE SHOCK.

RATATA
TATATA
SPLAT
SPLAT
KRE
IT'S DROPPED JOHN!
TOURNIQUET, QUICKLY!
IT'S LEAVING!
WE PUSHED IT BACK!!

YOU!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU TRACKED US DOWN OR WHO YOU HURT TO FIND OUR HIDEOUT, BUT YOUR BULLSHIT NAIVE-KID ACT ENDS HERE! FUCKING HAZARD TECH MONSTER!
NO, I WANT TO HELP--
MY ASS, YOU WANT TO HELP!
THAT THING NEVER CROSSED THE BAY UNTIL YOU GOT HERE! IT NEVER SO MUCH AS TOUCHED THE WATER! BUT YOU SHOW UP, AND SUDDENLY IT DOES TOO!
GET THE HELL OUT OF--
CRASH
IT'S BACK!!
THIS ONE'S HUGE!
WHY
SHOOT IT!
NO, IT'S TOO BIG!
FORGET THE GUNS! JUST RUN!

RUN!
AAH!
COME ON!
ACK!
SPLURP!

HEAD DOWNHILL TO THE SHORE! IT DOESN'T GO IN THE WATER!
BUT IT MUST HAVE! IT CROSSED THE BAY, RIGHT?
IT NEVER DID BEFORE, THERE MUST BE A REASON FOR IT! MAYBE WE CAN STILL USE IT [illegible]!
WE'RE DEAD OTHERWISE
IF YOU WISH TO SAVE THEIR LIVES, YOU NEED TO STOP RUNNING ALONGSIDE THEM
HUH?
HAZARD SAID THE DROSERESQUE CAN SENSE WHERE YOU ARE, AND CAN PICK CIRCUITS OUT FROM OTHER HUMANS.
IF THEY ARE CORRECT THAT IT HAS NEVER CROSSED THE WATER, IT MAY HAVE LACKED PROPER MOTIVATION BEFORE. IT MAY BE HUNTING US NOW
RUN ANOTHER DIRECTION
JAY! CAN YOU SWIM?
I I DON'T KNOW, I MIGHT HAVE TWISTED MY ANKLE
I CAN'T LEAVE THEM
STAY AND THEY DIE CHOOSE
!!!!!!!!!! HATE THIS IDEA!!

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE ARE THEY GOING?
IT'S CHASING THEM! THE WHOLE THING WENT AFTER THEM!
WHAT DO WE DO?!
..WE HELP JAY. FOLLOW ME!
WHERE ARE WE ?!
JUST HANG ON!!
IT'S FOLLOWING US!
OH FOR FUCK'S SAKES. WHY IS TAKEO ALWAYS RIGHT?!
BZZT
KRCCC
DO NOT DO THAT
AAAAH!!

Hrgh!
AAH!!
SPLAT
SPLUHK!
SPLIP!
WAIT WAIT WAIT WAIT WAIT!!!

BZZZ
BZZT
SPLAT!
SPLIK!
KRREE!
CRRSSH
CRRRSHHH
PLOP
FLISH

YOUR SUIT SEEMS TO HAVE PROTECTIONS EVEN WITHOUT THE POWER PACK. YOU ARE LUCKY IT ABSORBED SOME OF THE DROSERESQUE'S ATTACK EARLIER.
...J-JAY, YOU RUN ONE WAY, AND I'LL HEAD ANOTHER.
IT SHOULD LEAVE YOU ALONE.
I DON'T... THINK I CAN... MOVE...
AAAAAH!!
IT IS TOO LATE FOR THAT. IT SEEMS IT CAN TELL YOU ARE TOGETHER.
PUT ME DOWN! HELP ME!!

HEY!
PUT HIM DOWN!
CAN YOU UNDERSTAND ME? I KNOW IT'S ME YOU WANT!
KRRAWW

BE QUICK, GIVE YOUR STRONGEST BLAST, STRAIGHT DOWN AT IT
WHAT? BUT YOU SAID--
DO IT.
SWISH
BINND
KRAWL

BOOM!
ROAR
RIP
SIZZLE
SPRSH!
SPRSH!

IT COULD NOT ABSORB SO MUCH POWER ALL AT ONCE. IT APPEARS YOU HAVE DISABLED ITS LARGEST HEAD.
Hngh!
Y-YEAH, BUT THAT WAS EVERYTHING I HAD. I'M SPENT NOW.
STILL BETTER WITH IT OUT OF THE WAY. BUT STILL, DO NOT LET IT GRAB YOU, AT ALL COSTS.
HEY! LET ME GO ALREADY!

HISSSS
RATATAT
RATATATATA
SPLIP!
PLP!
SPLORCH!
PSHK!

JAY!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
IT ALMOST GOT US!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT CAME OVER TO THIS ISLAND! IT'S NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE!
ARE YOU HURT?
I'M DIZZY AND I THINK I'M GOING TO THROW UP.
HERE, SIT DOWN.

LATER...
WE WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
BUT I WANT TO HELP.
YOU ALMOST GOT US ALL KILLED. JOHN MIGHT STILL DIE YET.
YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THAT THING COMES BACK.
LARS, REALLY? YOU WANT TO JUST LET HIM GO? HE'LL TELL ZINCMAN WHERE WE ARE! WE'LL LOSE EVERYTHING!
HE'S NOT GOING TO TELL ZINCMAN ANYTHING.
YOU TRUST HIM? WHY?
WE CAN'T HELP THE OTHERS IF WE GET CAPTURED AGAIN! HE'S NOT WORTH RISKING EVERYTHING WE'VE WORKED FOR!
LET'S JUST KILL HIM NOW--
NO. HE FOUGHT THAT THING. HE BUSTED UP ONE OF ITS HUGE HEADS, THE DANGEROUS ONES.
THOSE THINGS DON'T GROW THAT SIZE OVERNIGHT. IF HE'S WORKING FOR ZINCMAN, THAT'S A HUGE SETBACK FOR HIM.
SO YOU DO TRUST HIM?
I TRUST HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT NOT KNOWING WHAT THE SNAKE IS, AND NOT WORKING FOR ZINCMAN.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I THINK HE CAN HELP US.
YOU'VE HURT THAT THING BAD, BUT YOU ALSO COST US. OUR FOOTHOLD, OUR LIVES, EVERYTHING.
YOU WANNA HELP? GO KILL IT YOURSELF.
I UNDERSTAND.
END